

### REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 17-21, 23 and 24 are presented for consideration. Claim 17 is the sole independent claim. Claims 22, 25 and 26 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 17 has been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed. Accordingly, no new matter has been added.

Applicant notes with appreciation that claim 22 was indicated as containing allowable subject matter. To expedite allowance of this application, Applicant has substantively incorporated the subject matter of claim 22 in independent claim 17. Applicant submits therefore, that independent claim 17, as well as claims 18-21, 23 and 24 depending therefrom, should be deemed allowable at the outset.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 17, 18, 21 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,945,268 to Nihei et al. Claims 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Nihei et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,868,432 to Karita et al. Claims 24-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Nihei et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,069,417 to Yuan et al. Applicant submits that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach or suggest many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claims 17-26. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, as discussed above, Applicant has amended independent

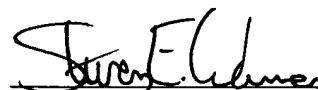
claim 17 to substantively incorporate the subject matter of claim 22, which was indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Applicant submits, therefore, that independent claim 17, as well as claims 18-21, 23 and 24, depending therefrom, should be deemed allowable. Applicant further submits that all pending claims, namely, claims 17-21, 23 and 24, being allowable, the instant application is in condition for allowance.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance.

Applicant further requests that the Examiner contact his undersigned representative should any matters be deemed outstanding precluding allowance of this application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven E. Warner", is written over a horizontal line.

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